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Protecting the Soviets while Kissinger ignored Congress

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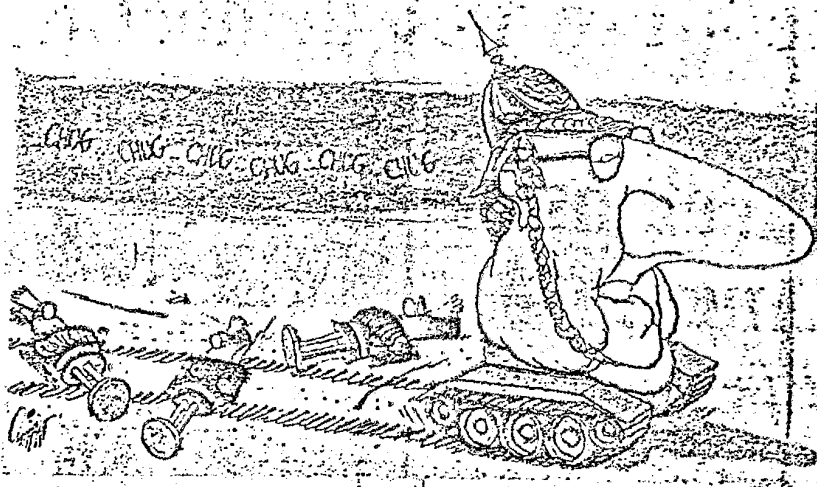
WASHINGTON — Two recent events — a press conference, and some testimony in Congress — demonstrate why distrust of Secretary of State Kissinger, once a small rivulet, now is a rolling river.

Kissinger's Dec. 9 press conference was, primarily, a response to charges (some made to Congress) that he has been lax about insisting on Soviet compliance with the strategic arms agreement. Kissinger began by saying: "I will not deal with specific testimony that may have been given except to note that no opportunity was presented to any member of the administration to present the truth."

But since March Kissinger has ducked repeated invitations to testify in closed session on compliance questions. Defense Secretary Schlesinger and CIA Director Colby (both fired) testified. Kissinger blocked release of even a severely censored version of Colby's testimony, even though Colby agreed to the release of it.

Now, consider Kissinger's press conference treatment of the suspicion the Soviets have evaded the intent of the SALT I provision that neither side may build new "fixed land-based intercontinental missile launchers." Since signing the agreement the Soviet have built at least 150 silos that are the precise size of the SS-18 missile silos, and have launcher-type suspension systems.

The Soviets straightfacedly insist the silos are only for command and control centers. But the issue is whether a command module can be quickly plucked out of the silo and replaced with a missile. These "com-



mand" silos have "blow away" lids of the sort that can be exploded off a missile silo for a quick launch. And there are duplicate command centers adjacent to these "command" silos.

Kissinger told the press that there have been numerous exchanges and, "We have since received assurances... that we are dealing with command and control silos. We have been given criteria which seem to us for the time being adequate."

But the issue is not future construction, it is completed construction — the "blow off" lids and adjacent command centers. The Soviets have rejected our request that they modify the lids and dismantle the adjacent command centers. And by asserting that we have received adequate assurances, Kissinger has destroyed any possibility that the Soviets will do what our negotiators have asked.

A week after the press conference, documents and testimony given to the House Intelligence Committee demonstrated that Kissinger has withheld crucial national security information — including reports about Soviet silo construction — from senior administration officials.

Among those Kissinger excluded were Secretary of State William Rogers, the chief of the U.S. delegation at the strategic arms talks; and the two senior U.S. members of the joint U.S.-Soviet group that is supposed to monitor compliance with the arms agreement.

Obviously, Kissinger's "hold system" was designed, at least in part, to prevent "leaks" of information — sort of. He was concerned not with leaks to the Soviets, but leaks to the public.